THE ADVISOR

A Publication of the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board

Summer 2000

Independent Review of Soil Action Levels Complete



U.S. Forest Service firefighter starts test burn at Rocky Flats on April 6, 2000.

Burn Plan Generates Controversy, But Nature Has the Final Say

arlier this spring, the Department of Energy began providing information to the public about its plans to conduct a controlled burn in approximately 500 acres of the Rocky Flats buffer zone. The proposed controlled burn had two primary objectives. First, it was intended to burn away dead vegetation that could serve to fuel an unplanned wild fire. A second desired effect of a controlled burn was to recycle nutrients and revitalize the soil. Additionally, a burn would serve to control the spread of noxious

weeds. This strategy had originally been discussed as part of the site's 1999 Natural Resource Management Plan.

The plan met stiff opposition from some members of the public who were concerned about the possibility of a release of contamination during the burn. After two very heated public meetings, the Department of Energy agreed to conduct a test burn with air monitoring to assure the local communities that no contamination would be released in such a burn.

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ver the past year and a half, *The Advisor* has provided updates concerning the progress of an independent evaluation of the Radionuclide Soil Action Levels (RSALs) for cleanup of plutonium-contaminated soils at Rocky Flats. The evaluation has been overseen by a group of community members called the Radionuclide Soil Action Levels Oversight Panel. The Department of Energy provided the group with grant money totaling near \$550,000 to hire the contractor who conducted the evaluation and to provide administrative support. Risk Assessment Corporation (RAC), headed by Dr. John Till, conducted the analysis. Dr. Till presented his findings at a public meeting held on March 23.

Concern over the Radionuclide Soil Action Levels started in the fall of 1996 when the Department of Energy, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and the Environmental Protection Agency approved numerical values for how much plutonium contamination in the soil would trigger an "action" such as removal, containment, or stabilization. Based on knowledge of such levels for plutonium-contaminated soil set for other areas in the United States and foreign locations, the community was concerned that the Rocky Flats numbers were too high. Plutonium concentrations in soil are measured in units called picocuries per gram of soil. The number selected for Rocky Flats was 651 picocuries per gram. Other sites worldwide range from 20 to 200 picocuries per gram. To answer the question of whether the number at Rocky Flats was indeed too high, the community asked the Department of Energy to fund an independent study that culminated in the work carried out by Risk Assessment Corporation.

In its investigation, RAC studied the cleanup

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Rocky Flats Updates



New Site Manager Appointed

In early March, Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson named Barbara Mazurowski the Operations Manager for DOE's Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site. Ms. Mazurowski most recently was responsible for oversight of the first phase of cleanup at the West Valley site in New York. She also oversaw the vitrification of more than 600,000 gallons of high-level waste at two radioactive waste vitrification plants. Prior to employment with DOE, Ms. Mazurowski worked for the Department of Defense in the Contract Management Area Office in Buffalo, New York. She holds a B.S. in Industrial Technology from the State University of New York (SUNY) in Buffalo, a Certificate in Project Management from SUNY, and an M.B.A. from St. Bonaventure University in New York. Ms. Mazurowski will begin work at Rocky Flats in June.

Plutonium and Waste Shipments

In order to achieve closure by the year 2006, Rocky Flats will need to ship all the current inventory of plutonium and waste materials from the site. When Rocky Flats officially ended its production mission in the early 1990s, much of its inventory of plutonium remained in various forms including the finished "pit" product, unassembled parts, raw metal, oxides, residues, and wastes. In 1999, a major milestone was reached for the site when its remaining inventory of plutonium pits was shipped to the Pantex facility in Texas. This past April, the site achieved another milestone with the removal of all the scrub alloy, a scrap form of plutonium left

over from the former manufacturing operations. Just over 1,500 pounds of scrub alloy were sent to the Savannah River Site in South Carolina. DOE completed a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement in 1999 that selected Savannah River as the receiver site for the bulk of Rocky Flats remaining plutonium inventory. Besides the scrub alloy, DOE began shipping to Savannah River a category of plutonium called "classified parts," which are components of plutonium pits that were never assembled.

In order to begin preparing other forms of plutonium for shipping, Rocky Flats has been developing a treatment and packaging system for the past several years. After many difficulties and significant budget overruns, DOE now expects that the packaging system will become operational by August of this year. This packaging system will place plutonium metal and oxides into specially designed canisters meant to allow safe storage and transport of the materials. DOE hopes to complete shipments of the metal and oxides by the year 2002. The site estimates that over 100 shipments will be necessary to remove all of the materials.

As Rocky Flats closes more facilities onsite, the ultimate goal is to consolidate all of the plutonium into Building 371. The site upgraded this building over the past several years to strengthen its ability to handle a catastrophic event such as an earthquake. 371 will house the treatment and packaging system and will be the central staging area for plutonium shipments.

Rocky Flats achieved another milestone in March when shipments of transuranic waste to the WIPP site resumed. After beginning shipments last summer, DOE halted shipping in November to allow inspectors from the state of New Mexico to certify the waste shipments were in compliance with the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) permit issued last fall. Once the inspectors gave the go-ahead, Rocky Flats began shipping on March

10. By this summer, DOE hopes to begin shipping up to three truckloads per week. Site officials report their goal is to have daily shipments once the decommissioning and demolition of buildings begins in earnest in a few years.

Long-Term Stewardship Dialogue

For the past several months, the Citizens Advisory Board and the Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments have been working to develop a process for discussing long-term stewardship issues at Rocky Flats. Long-term stewardship encompasses the activities necessary to protect the public from any remaining contamination after the site is closed. The two groups have formed a Working Group to study some of the current issues and explore the stewardship implications of various cleanup decisions. Members of the public will be invited to attend and participate in all Working Group meetings, which will be on the fourth Thursday of each month. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for these meetings, please contact the RFCAB office at (303) 420-7855 or send an e-mail to: debt@rfcab.org.

Fall Stewardship Seminar

Each year, DOE-Headquarters sponsors a seminar for the Advisory Boards across the weapons complex to get together and discuss issues of common interest. This year's seminar is being hosted by the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board. The subject will be a second discussion on stewardship. An estimated 125 individuals will participate in the conference; about 90 of these will come from out of state.

RFCAB staff will organize and plan the event, which will be funded primarily through DOE's Office of Environmental Management. The seminar will be held at the Executive Tower Hotel in downtown Denver from October 24-29. If you are interested in more information, please contact either Ken Korkia or Deb Thompson at (303) 420-7855.

Plans Begin to Address Protection of Rocky Flats Land After Cleanup

ith a proposed closure date of 2006 set into place for Rocky Flats, some attention is now being focused on crafting mechanisms for preserving the site's natural resources once cleanup is complete.

One such mechanism is already in place. Last May, the Department of Energy signed an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designating approximately 800 acres in the northwest buffer zone of Rocky Flats as the Rock Creek Reserve. The goals of this agreement are to preserve unique habitat for future generations and protect threatened and endangered wildlife.

In the summer of 1999, U.S. Representative Mark Udall introduced H.R. 2179, the Rocky Flats Open Space Act. This act calls for the Rocky Flats buffer zone to be permanently managed as open space upon completion of cleanup. The act specifies that the federal government will maintain ownership and responsibility for Rocky Flats, and that a public process will be used to develop a recommended future open space management plan for the site. The bill also is very clear in stating that it will not affect the level of cleanup required under existing laws. Congressman Udall circulated this draft bill for comments with the Rocky Flats community and held a public hearing in December to take public comment. The bill was assigned to both the House Commerce and Resources Committees, but no action has been taken to this point.

U.S. Senator Wayne Allard offered his own proposal in April 2000. At this time, he circulated to Rocky Flats stakeholders draft legislation that would designate Rocky Flats as a National Wildlife Refuge. This proposal applies to the entire site, and like Congressman Udall's bill, stipulates continued federal ownership and responsibility, and states it will not restrict the level of cleanup required under CERCLA. This draft legislation would transfer administrative jurisdiction of Rocky Flats to the Secretary of Interior upon completion of cleanup. The site would then be managed in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966. This act also calls for a public process to develop recommendations on a variety of issues related to future management of the site. Other provisions in the draft legislation would prohibit annexation of Rocky Flats land by any local government, and restrict road construction and permanent construction with certain exceptions. Senator Allard decided to circulate his proposal to the Rocky Flats community prior to introducing it in the Senate. He plans to incorporate comments he receives and introduce the legislation during the next congressional session.

Next Steps

Allard's proposal and Udall's bill both contain similar provisions and there is a chance that the two men will work together to reconcile the bills so that the same bill can be introduced in both the House and the Senate. Members of the public are encouraged to share their views on this possibility.

The Fish and Wildlife Service submitted an Annual Report in February 2000, which included several recommendations for management of the Rock Creek Reserve. Some of the recommendations included:

- Expanding the boundaries of the reserve to make it more compatible with natural ecological systems and topography,
- Reintroducing native non-game fish species,
- Continuing aggressive vegetation management to control noxious weed species; and
- Pursuing potential designation of Rocky Flats as a National Wildlife Refuge.

Rocky Flats is planning a public dialogue in the coming months to discuss the recommendations and decide how the Department of Energy should proceed.

For more information:

Rock Creek Reserve Mariane Anderson, DOE (303) 966-6088

Representative Udall's Open Space Act Doug Young, Rep. Udall's Office (303) 457-4500

Senator Allard's Wildlife Refuge Act Janice Sinden, Sen. Allard's Office (303) 220-8126

Is Your Organization Looking for Interesting Speakers?

Members of the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board are available at your convenience to present a 20-30 minute slideshow on Rocky Flats. This slideshow covers the history of Rocky Flats, an explanation of the current cleanup program, as well as information about how the public can get more involved in cleanup decisions.

Please call (303) 420-7855 or e-mail erogers@rfcab.org for more information.

Planned Burn Controversy (continued from Page 1)

While this strategy did not satisfy everyone in the community, the test burn of about 50 acres took place on April 6. Monitoring data collected during this test burn showed no contamination above what would be expected with background levels of radiation in this area.

With this hurdle cleared, Rocky Flats was now ready to conduct the controlled burn as planned. However, an early greening up of the buffer zone quickly led site officials to conclude that the window of opportunity to carry out their plans had closed. According to DOE Deputy Assistant Manager John Rampe, "With too much green material, we cannot get an effective fire, and we cannot generate enough heat to burn off the thatch, which is the main point of the burn. It also means much more smoke." Rampe also noted that a burn would have disrupted bird nesting.

DOE does plan to again attempt to conduct a controlled burn either this fall or next spring. The existing burn plan is valid through April 2001. However, the open burning permit obtained from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment expired at the end of April. DOE would therefore need to request a new permit. DOE plans to use this delay to continue to work with interested members of the community to address any issues which still may concern them. RFCAB will keep the community posted on future developments.



Forest Service firefighters at work during the April test burn in the Rocky Flats buffer zone.

Is the Planned Burn a Danger to the Community?

DOE and regulatory agencies' position: There is no known contamination in the areas to be burned and the buffer zone has been extensively investigated and evaluated for this possibility. The assumption is that the majority of buffer zone contamination comes from the 903 Pad area. Only in areas where burials or other disposal activities were known to have occurred do the soils deviate from the 903 Pad plume pattern. Even if a burn were to occur in the most highly contaminated parts of the 903 Pad area, computer modeling shows there would not be a significant exposure risk. The predicted dose to a firefighter onsite would be 0.014 millirem. The closest possible offsite receptor would receive a hypothetical dose of 0.0061 millirem.

Concerns heard from citizens: Through its limited sampling program, DOE does not know exactly what contamination is in the areas to be burned. Even a test burn may not pick up a hot spot that could be ignited when the 500 acre fire is conducted. Alternative prairie management options should be explored with the community and appropriate experts.

How Would a Controlled Burn be Conducted?

- Conducted between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wind speed must be between
 2 and 10 mph
- Warning signs indicating "Prescribed Fire in Use" will be posted on roadways surrounding the site prior to ignitions
- Contingency plan in place for escaped fire

(this information is taken from the Rocky Flats Burn Plan, prepared by the U.S. Forest Service)

Who Would Conduct the Burn?

DOE entered into an Interagency Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, an agency with technical expertise and experience in conducting controlled burns. Under this agreement, the Forest Service is responsible for preparing and executing a burn plan, with the support of the Rocky Flats Fire Department. Other local fire departments will be called in if necessary.

Soil Action Level Review Results (continued from Page 1)

levels at other sites and the methodology used by the Department of Energy and the local regulators in setting the Rocky Flats action levels. The Radionuclide Soil Action Levels Oversight Panel held monthly meetings to oversee the work. To provide another level of oversight for the study, the Oversight Panel hired five additional widely respected experts who reviewed and commented on key aspects of RAC's methodologies and findings throughout the study.

In its presentation to the public, RAC reported its recommendation for a revised Radionuclide Soil Action
Level for plutonium as 35 picocuries per gram of soil. This number contrasts with the value of 651 originally set by DOE and the regulating agencies. RAC based its revised number on a more conservative future land use

scenario than that originally proposed. This new land use scenario is based on a rancher who might at some time in the future move with a family onto the Rocky Flats property. The rancher is assumed to raise livestock, grow his own vegetables, and drink the water found at the site. Perhaps the most dramatic addition to the scenario, which was not considered in DOE's original calculation, is the effect a wildfire might have on the movement of contamination. After such a catastrophic fire, the soil would be bare and more readily eroded by both wind and water. These erosional effects would have a great impact on the rancher and his family who could inhale contaminated soil blown about the ranch after the fire. RAC selected a Soil Action Level to guarantee with 90 percent certainty that the rancher

and his family would not receive a radiation dose exceeding 15 millirem from exposure to the contaminated soil, either by inhaling it or ingesting it. Fifteen millirem is a number adopted by the radiation protection community as an acceptable dose.

This summer, DOE and the regulators will review RAC's report and will determine what changes, if warranted, they will make to the Soil Action Levels by the end of this year. The public is invited and encouraged to participate in these discussions. Contact RFCAB at (303) 420-7855 for more information about opportunities for public involvement. Information about the independent study and an electronic copy of RAC's final report can be found on the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board web page at: www.rfcab.org/salop.html.

Wanted: Volunteers to Help Make Important Decisions about the Cleanup and Closure of Rocky Flats

Do you wonder about what is happening at the Rocky Flats site and how it affects your future?

Would you be interested in learning about what the Department of Energy and its contractor have planned to finish cleaning up and closing down this former nuclear weapons production facility?

Are you dedicated to working toward common goals, and being involved in decisions that impact your community?

If so, the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board needs your help! The Board is soliciting applications from interested citizens in our communities to fill several vacancies. In order to best maintain our diversity, right now our strongest need is for representatives who are women, minorities, health care workers, or individuals who can represent either a business interest or their local community.

Primary membership criteria is a time commitment of about 10 or 15 hours per month, which includes:

- 1) Attending monthly Board meetings
- 2) Active participation on a committee or focus group
- 3) Preparing for meetings by reading written material and keeping up-to-date on current issues

Candidates must express a willingness, ability and desire to strive for consensus recommendations.

To obtain a membership application packet, or for more detailed information about the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board, call us at 303-420-7855; send an e-mail to rfcab@indra.com; visit the Board's web site at www.rfcab.org; or write to: Membership Committee, Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board, 9035 North Wadsworth Parkway, Suite 2250, Westminster, CO 80021.



This Issue: Hanford Advisory Board

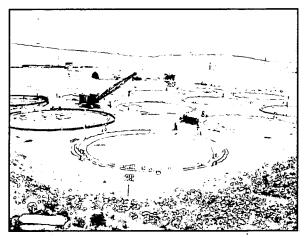
The Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board is one of several Site-Specific Advisory Boards (SSABs) that have been formed at former nuclear weapons production sites. In each issue of <u>The Advisor</u>, we spotlight the activities of one of these boards.

he Hanford site is located on 560 square miles near the Columbia River in southeastern Washington State. Hanford served as a plutonium production complex for more than 50 years beginning in the 1940s. Now Hanford is in the midst of a large-scale cleanup effort.

A Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) between DOE, EPA, and the Washington Department of Ecology was signed in 1989. This agreement establishes milestones and a schedule for cleanup and restoration of the Hanford site over a 30-year period. Thus, the TPA forms the regulatory framework for cleanup.

In 1998, Congress established within DOE an Office of River Protection, which in part is charged with safely managing Hanford's tank waste retrieval, treatment, and disposal. Some 54 million gallons of radioactive and toxic waste sit in obsolete and corroding underground tanks at the Hanford site. Some of that waste has already leaked into the ground and is moving slowly toward the river. These tank wastes comprise the highest hazard and largest concentration of radioactive waste on the site. The waste is made up of liquid, sludge, and salt cakes in 177 underground storage tanks. The high level fraction of the materials left from nuclear fission will be vitrified (made into glass) and disposed of in a deep geologic repository. The remaining wastes will be retrieved, vitrified, and disposed of by near-surface burial at Hanford.

The tank waste treatment program, managed by the Office of River Protection (ORP), tops the priority list for immediate attention at Hanford, both by site representatives and members



The historical photo above shows construction of a tank farm in progress at the Hanford site, 1944.

of the Hanford Advisory Board (HAB). However, a tank waste vitrification plant still needs to be designed and constructed before removal and treatment of the waste can begin. The Board has formed a special ad-hoc committee to follow all aspects of the negotiations surrounding construction and operation of a vitrification plant. In consensus advice approved this past February, HAB urged the Department of Energy to demonstrate its commitment to fund the treatment and disposal of Hanford's tank waste by "development of agreed upon TPA milestones and a

financial/funding path forward..." The Board's advice also stated that "detailed, credible alternatives analysis should be completed to ensure that ORP has optimized its financial and technical approach to tank waste treatment."

Other issues of serious concern to the Board include the disposal of spent nuclear fuel, as well as cleanup and decommissioning of the Plutonium Finishing Plant. About 80 percent of DOE's inventory of spent nuclear fuel is housed in the K Basins at Hanford. Removal of the spent fuel will begin this year. The Plutonium Finishing Plant was used to produce the plutonium metal for nuclear weapons. Cleanup work resumed in early 1999 to treat, repackage, and eventually ship approximately 17.8 metric tons of plutonium-bearing material to South Carolina until a long-term disposal facility becomes available.

HAB's mission is to provide advice to DOE, EPA, and the Washington State Department of Ecology. During the past six

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Advisory Board Forms New Committee to Study Remediation Technologies

n March, the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board established a new committee called the Remediation Technologies Committee. The committee is tasked with exploring issues surrounding how technologies are selected for cleaning up or stabilizing contaminated areas at Rocky Flats. At its first meeting on April 19, the group selected Board members Markuené Sumler and Bill Kossack to serve as co-chairs.

In order to gain a better understanding of how remediation technologies are selected, the committee has established a five-point work plan. First, the group will learn about the regulatory process and how it affects remedy selection. Next, the members will gain an understanding of the timeline for decisionmaking at Rocky Flats. Also, as part of the learning curve, the members will collect information on the identified areas of contamination at the site and will inquire about the plans for characterizing those areas where information still needs to be gathered. To complete its study, the committee will investigate what types of remediation technologies are available and will analyze each for applicability at Rocky Flats. Part of this analysis will be to

examine case studies of how different technologies have been utilized at other contaminated sites.

Once it has completed its investigation, the committee will decide whether to develop a set of recommendations for consideration by the Board for transmittal to the Department of Energy. Besides developing recommendations, the committee may choose to write a white paper outlining its findings. If you would like more information on the Remediation Technologies Committee or would like to be notified of upcoming meetings, please contact the CAB office at (303) 420-7855.

Hanford Advisory Board (continued from page 6)

years, the Board has submitted 107 pieces of consensus advice. Currently HAB has 30 members and 37 alternates representing the State of Oregon, local city and county governments, union and non-union members, tribes, public interest groups, environmental organizations, and regional economic and health groups. The Hanford Advisory Board is the only SSAB whose members are selected by those interest groups. For example, the State of Oregon, City of Richland, Umatilla Tribe, or environmental groups nominate their representatives. The EPA and Washington's Department of Ecology nominate members of the public at-large, union/non-union representatives, and individuals representing universities.

HAB participates in several ongoing activities designed to include the public in the decisions being made at the site. They include preparing an insert to *The Hanford Update*, a bi-monthly newsletter; briefings and participation in open public comment sessions on various subjects brought forth through the Tri-Party Agreement; and participation in quarterly public involvement planning meetings.

For more information about the Hanford Advisory Board: www.hanford.gov/boards/hab/index.htm

or for the Hanford site:
www.hanford.gov

RFCAB Website: www.rfcab.org

The Advisor is published quarterly by the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board (RFCAB). The Executive Editor is Jerry DePoorter. Please send your questions, suggestions and ideas to:

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RFCAB MISSION STATEMENT

The Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board, a nonpartisan, broadly representative, independent advisory board with concerns related to Rocky Flats activities, is dedicated to providing informed recommendations and advice to the agencies (Department of Energy, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency), government entities and other interested parties on policy and technical issues and decisions related to cleanup, waste management and associated activities. The Board is dedicated to public involvement, awareness and education on Rocky Flats issues.

Rocky Flats Public Meeting Calendar

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1 5 7 8 15 19	Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board Work Session Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments RFCAB Remediation Technologies Committee Rocky Flats Soil Action Levels Oversight Panel Actinide Migration Evaluation Technical Review Group RFCAB Remediation Technologies Committee	6 - 9:30 p.m. 8 - 11 a.m. 6 - 8 p.m. 4 - 6 p.m. 5 - 7 p.m. 6 - 8 p.m.	College Hill Library Jeffco Airport RFCAB office Broomfield City Hall RFCAB office RFCAB office
22	Stewardship Working Group	6 - 8 p.m.	Arvada City Hall
Jun 6 10 13 20 27	ly Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board Work Session Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments Rocky Flats Soil Action Levels Oversight Panel Actinide Migration Evaluation Technical Review Group Stewardship Working Group	6 - 9:30 p.m. 8 - 11 a.m. 4 - 6 p.m. 5 - 7 p.m. 6 - 8 p.m.	College Hill Library Jeffco Airport Broomfield City Hall RFCAB office Arvada City Hall
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ALL MEETINGS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE, PLEASE CALL BEFORE YOU GO -- (303) 420-7855

Arvada City Hall, 8101 Ralston Road, Arvada Broomfield City Hall, One Descombes Drive, Broomfield

College Hill Library, Front Range Community College, 3705 West 112th Avenue, Westminster Jefferson County Airport Terminal Building, Mount Evans Room, 11755 Airport Way, Broomfield RFCAB office, 9035 North Wadsworth Parkway, Suite 2250, Westminster

Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board 9035 Wadsworth Parkway, Suite 2250 Westminster, CO 80021

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